Distr.: GENERAL

E/ECA/CM.13/32/Add.1
3 February 1987

Original: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Eighth meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
13 - 20 April 1987

Item 14 of the provisional agenda*

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Twenty-second session of the Commission/ thirteenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
23 - 27 April 1987

Item 6 of the provisional agenda**

LC/NAIROBI

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF ECA-SPONSORED INSTITUTIONS AND ECA CHIEFS OF DIVISION AND PROJECT OFFICERS NAZARETH, ETHIOPIA, 28 FEBRUARY - 1 MARCH 1987

* E/ECA/TPCW.8/1.
** E/ECA/CM.13/1.

M87-858

Report of the Meeting of Chief Executives of ECA-sponsored Institutions and ECA Chiefs of Division and Project Officers, Nazareth, Ethiopia 28 February - 1 March 1987

1. At the Sixth Conference of Chief Executives held in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 1986, serious concern was expressed about the need to develop a more healthy and efficient relationship between the ECA-sponsored institutions and the ECA divisions. There was also a felt need for a clearer understanding of the role of ECA as a sponsoring organization and as an executing agency for projects in the institutions funded by UNDP and other donors. An agenda item on the subject was not considered in the required depth at the Seventh Conference held in Tripoli, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, from 24-27 January 1987, because of the absence of most ECA division Chiefs. It was therefore decided that a meeting of the Chief Executives and Chiefs of Division should take place in Nazareth, Ethiopia, from 28 February to 1 March 1987. It was attended by 13 Chief Executives and 30 Division Chiefs and Project Officers.

2. The accountability of ECA as a sponsoring institution to member States was considered in terms of ECA's responsibility:

(a) In ensuring that the institutions achieve the objectives for which they were established;

(b) In monitoring and providing support for what goes on in the institutions;

(c) In projecting a proper image of the institutions to member States, with a view to generating interest and support;

(d) In ascertaining that the institutions work harmoniously and in complementarity:

(i) among and between themselves,
(ii) between ECA divisions and the institutions.

3. In discussing these and related issues, it was repeatedly emphasized that most member States see the institutions as having been of ECA's creation and, therefore, ECA has the responsibility to ensure that they survive and thrive. ECA was expected to provide continued support, intellectual and otherwise, to the institutions; the success cases are, in fact, those that have received ECA's guidance on a continuous basis. Furthermore, member States are interested in the institutions being relevant, complementary and harmonious, healthy, and productive. ECA has the responsibility to ensure that these interests are safeguarded and to provide information to member States to show that their interests are being promoted. Member States created the institutions as a means towards assisting ECA attain its development goals. It was because of the confidence they have in ECA that they requested the Executive Secretary to play a major role in the policy-making organs.

4. A differing view was that ECA, in line with its mandate, identified institution -building as a legitimate strategy for dealing with Africa's numerous and varied development problems. Member States accepted this and created the specialized institutions. They are, therefore, the parents not ECA, which only assisted at birth and should not be expected to stay around for long thereafter. ECA executes funds of donors but does not contribute financially to their operations as do the member States. Where there are institutions with funds that ECA does not execute the relationship becomes one of mere technical co-operation between the ECA divisions and the institutions concerned. This calls for minimal involvement in the actual running of the institutions. The technical aspects of the relationship deserved greater attention: ECA should monitor the technical capabilities of the institutions, and where found wanting, advise member States on what actions to take, however drastic. It was emphasized that one reason why member States do not show the desired interest in the institutions is that they do not see the institutions as theirs but as belonging to ECA, which encouraged this perception by its excessive involvement in their growth. Similarly, some outside organizations have been known to be reluctant to assist some of the institutions because they see them as ECA's. In actual fact, ECA is only a cog in the wheel. It is the Governing Council/Boards that should run the institutions and member States should be compelled to rise to their responsibilities. In this connection, it was noted that ECA still serves as the secretariat for some of the institutions and this inhibits their development. The very unwillingness of the member States to host the secretariats could be regarded as an indication that the institutions concerned are not useful to them. However, it was also admitted that if ECA terminated its guardianship these institutions would die prematurely.

5. A middle position was that the relationship between ECA and the sponsored institutions should not be viewed in absolute terms nor in terms of one party being a "parent", "child" or "midwife". All the institutions were established in response to the need for providing member States with specialized technical services through African institutions that are not an integral part of the United Nations system. Such capabilities could have been developed in corresponding units within ECA but the need for promoting autonomous, self-reliant African institutions was more compelling. Once the specialized institutions had been established and embarked on operational activities ECA should be dependent on them and not duplicate their activities. The benefits would be mutual and overall African capability would be enhanced. Furthermore, ECA's monitoring, rationalization and support responsibilities are of different grades, an effort must be made to find the right mix. Some institutions are said to be resentful and antagonistic towards ECA to the point where they prefer to deal with other organizations than with ECA. Was this because of "over-monitoring or over-supporting"? Or was it because they want uncontrolled freedom?

6. The concensus that emerged from the discussions was that:

(a) The primary responsibility for promoting the institutions, mobilizing and sustaining support, increasing productivity, and promoting the right image, belong to the institutions themselves. The management and the legislative organs of the institutions have the basic duty to see to the success of the institutions and ensure that the objectives set for them are realized;

(b) ECA has a secondary responsibility. It is not in the front line. It has to lend its weight in support of the institutions. In the process it should exercise the best judgement - neither overplay nor underplay its role but work for the right type of balance. ECA's judgement must not undermine the effectiveness of the parties that have primary responsibility for the institutions i.e. the member States, the policy-making bodies, the management and the staff of the institutions.

7. On the subject of existing relationships between ECA substantive divisions and the institutions, according to the reports from both sides there was a good deal of co-operation and smooth working relations. Generally, there were frequent consultations on such matters as staff needs, main orientations and substance of work programmes and on problems arising from time to time. Some Divisions were actively involved in provision of advisory services, fund raising, and assistance in preparation of technical documents for the institutions. In cases, divisions also provided programming support. Joint programme implementation activities were undertaken primarily in an effort to avoid duplication, ensure that activities are complementary and that each contributes inputs to the other's work. Exchange of publications was another field of co-operation. Several Chief Executives reported having received strong support from the divisions in the expansion of membership, in efforts to get member States to pay their contributions, in solicitation of donor funds and, recently, in the preparation of the project documents for funding under the UNDP Fourth Programming Cycle. Through the participation of divisions in meetings of the institutions' policy-making organs they are also able to acquire better insights into problems of the institutions and to provide valuable contributions to both the substantive and managerial aspects of the operations of the institutions. The fact that the Executive Secretary personally chairs many of the legislative bodies also facilitates relations considerably. In the final analysis what really mattered was the extent to which close personal relationships existed between the leaderships in both the divisions and the institutions.

8. On proposals for improving relationships in the future it was noted that at the technical level a significant step would be to agree on joint implementation of programmes, element by element, and of relevant Programme Implementation Plans (PIPs). More generally, institutions should be encouraged to fill gaps in expertise that exist in the divisions. A dangerous trend with a few institutions was for them to get the divisions more and more involved in dealing with internal management problems which the Chiefs Executives should themselves handle. Though it may be that such problems are best tackled by an outside third party this practice can have serious delecterous long-term consequences both for the institutions and for ECA.

9. Another proposal of note was that the divisions should be seen to be more active in mobilizing resources for the institutions and in ensuring their financial security. One means would be subcontracting of technical co-operation project components and granting of consultancy assignments of the institutions. Also, there should be closer co-operation between the divisions in familiarizing the institutions with technical assistance procedures.

10. Increased two-way information flows was also recommended as a means of promoting greater understanding. Informal meetings, such as the present one, would also contribute in no small measure to better awareness of who is whom and what is happening on all sides. Where consultations between institutions and divisions were continuous problems were reduced to a minimum. Conversely, where consultations were not regular problems were more complex. Relations established between the individuals at the helm on both sides contribute more than anything else to the creation of a proper problem-solving environment. It was also emphasized that project officers are very critical. Division Chiefs cannot be personally involved in monitoring the activities of institutions. Therefore, the effectivensss or otherwise of the focal points designated for each institution becomes of primary importance. It was recommended that Chief Executives establish regular contracts with their respective project officers.

11. On the subject of the relationship between the ECA Division of Administration and Conference Services (ACSD) and the institutions two problem-areas were singled out for detailed consideration. First, problem-areas in project implementation, particularly procurement and supply and personnel recruitment. Second, modalities for sub-contracting specialized technical co-operation project activities to the institutions.

12. In the discussions following, it was agreed that the concern was not to have the rules and regulations regarding procurement and supply, personnel action, financial management or any other aspects of administration changed but to have things done speedily and more efficiently. The fact that on any one administrative matter institutions have to deal with the substantive divisions, the Technical Assistance Co-ordination and Operation Office (TACOO) and one or more of the sections in ACSD, does not make it easier for them. The procedures governing procurement, financial management and personnel management must be respected even at the cost of delays. Attention should, therefore, be focussed on how to improve performance. Joint programming of PIPs by the institutions, the divisions, and TACOO for the implementation of their projects would facilitate advanced planning of actions requiring the involvement of ACSD and clarify what role is to be played at different points in time by all parties concerned.

13. To ensure that performance on all sides would be improved the meeting took the following decisions:

(i) ACSD should be reorganized so as to give special attention to administrative actions pertaining to all extrabudgetary resources. Measures taken to streamline the Division should be communicated to the Chief Executives so that they are clear as to who to deal with in future.

(ii) As a first step, the Deputy Chief of Administration was designated to be fully responsible for all matters relating to the institutions and technical co-operation projects of the institutions. He was to be the central point for follow up and co-ordination, and all correspondence should be sent to him or copied to him.

(iii) ACSD should prepare guidelines on recruitment of staff and consultants.

(iv) The Deputy Chief of ACSD, in his newly assigned capacity, should promptly send to the Chief Executives copies of all circulars based on which decisions regarding requests from the institutions are made. Any amendments in the future should also be sent to them.

(v) Notwithstanding decision (ii) above, on all substantive matters Chief Executives should deal with the substantive divisions, on mobilization of funds with TACOO, on administrative matters with ACSD. Copies of all communications with TACOO and ACSD should also be sent to the substantive divisions for information and follow-up.

(vi) On initial assumption of duty all new Chief Executives should be fully briefed on administrative and financial procedures in ECA and other matters which would ensure maximum effectiveness and minimum difficulties whether with ACSD or any other division.

(vii) The Deputy Chief of Administration should prepare a paper on administrative/financial actions that should be delegated (a) to the institutions, and (b) to the local UNDP offices.

(viii) When submitting requests to the ECA Contracts Committee, Chief Executives should provide information on local conditions (e.g. availability of maintenance facilities or technical expertise for installing equipment, fragility of items to be purchased) which would assist it in deciding whether or not the order should be placed locally.

14. On the subject of ECA as an executing agency much of the discussions revolved around the subject of sub-contracting and greater use of the institutions for undertaking consultancy assignments. It was pointed out that, globally, ECA has a large consultancy vote and the institutions could be assisted to develop further their technical capacities by assigning some consultancies to them. This should not be done for its own sake. Rather, the institutions should first be tried out and, depending on their track records, sub-contracting could be increased.

15. It was decided that each institution should prepare a profile of available expertise which would be used as a guide in allocating consultancies. For this purpose the Director of PADIS was requested to prepare a questionnaire which should be sent to all Chief Executives. They should be returned by April and, subsequently, compiled in a publication for wide distribution particularly to donor agencies. On the basis of experience gained, consideration could be given to such ideas as forming an association of ECA consultancy institutions.

16. On the subject of ECA's role in mobilizing resources, it was requested that when resource mobilization missions are organized TACOO should report on official reactions to project proposals submitted to the donors concerned, especially those not accepted. This would save the institutions from fruitless contracts with local donor offices and embassies. It was also considered useful for requests for the assistance from several institutions to the same donor to be centrally co-ordinated, in which case the institutions concerned would be invited to join any ECA missions to the donor country.

17. The question was raised as to whether TACOO has a programme for supporting the efforts of the institutions to get their member States to pay their contributions. In answer, it was explained that an ECA pledging conference is held every two years and Chief Executives could request their member States to subscribe to UNTFAD with specific commitment that all or part of their pledges should be used for a particular **institution.**

18. Another question was whether resource mobilization should be done on a loner's approach or on a collective approach. The concensus was that where the institutions felt themselves capable enough to go it alone they should do so but keep ECA informed of their initiatives. Assistance from ECA would be sought as and when required, particularly where large amounts of funds are involved. Overco-ordinating must be avoided but a greater flow of information on what each side is doing must be encouraged. In other words, co-ordination with flexibility was the favoured approach.

19. On the subject of work programming Chief Executives were requested to consider programming on a biennial basis as opposed to currently used annual budgets. Secondly, the introduction of programme budgeting - which requires matching resources with programmes - as opposed to administrative budgets. This should be done on a biennial basis with annual reviews. It has the advantage of making alignment with the programming system in ECA easier.

20. Institutions were also encouraged to introduce Medium Term Plans, which would serve as a framework for biennial programme budgeting. Monitoring was critical. For it to be effective a Programme Implementation Plan must be developed, either in conjunction with ECA if projects are involved, or independently. Finally, evaluation. It was noted that given the small size of most of the institutions it should be easy to develop appropriate evaluation systems which would, in particular, produce useful information on the impact of the work of the institutions. In all these fields ECA could provide assistance and, if desired, workshops could be organized on the use of these management tools.

21. To meet the need for more information on the institutions it was decided that Chiefs of Division should ensure that they have copies of the constitutions, staff regulations, financial regulations and all other basic documents of their relevant institutions. Chief Executives should send copies of these documents to the Deputy Chief, ACSD, for distribution to the divisions concerned.

22. Chief Executives were reminded to make greater use of the ICM Return of Skills Programme (administered by the Public Administration, Management and Manpower Division) and the United Nations Volunteers Programme.